

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 7779

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PINT, IV
SUBJECT: CIRCULATION OF ANONYMOUS LEAFLETS CRITICAL OF GOVERN-
MENT POLICIES

REF: ABIDJAN 6689

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN RECENT WEEKS AT LEAST TWO ANONYMOUS LEAFLETS
CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN EDUCATION AND PUBLIC TRANSPOR-
TATION HAVE CIRCULATED IN ABIDJAN AND OTHER URBAN CENTERS. AFTER
A MEETING CALLED TO DISCUSS THE LEAFLETS ON 14 AUGUST, THE POLI-
TICAL BUREAU OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF IVORY COAST (PDCI) STRONGLY
CONDEMNED THE CIRCULATION OF SUCH LEAFLETS, WARNED THOSE RESPONSIBLE,
AND ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ALL MEASURES NECESSARY TO PREVENT
FURTHER CIRCULATION. WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE LEAFLETS SIGNIFIED
WIDESPREAD OR SIGNIFICANT ANTI-GOVERNMENT SENTIMENT, THEIR AP-
PEARANCE WAS FIRST RECENT INDICATION OF SOME DISAFFECTION WITH
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ESTABLISHED CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATING GRIEVANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RECENT WEEKS AT LEAST TWO ANONYMOUS SETS OF LEAFLETS CRITICAL
OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE CIRCULATED IN ABIDJAN AND OTHER URBAN
CENTERS. A FEW WEEKS AGO ONE LEAFLET CIRCULATED CRITICIZING A
GOVERNMENT DECISION TO HOUSE FRENCH COOPERANTS IN HOUSING PREVIOUSLY
PROMISED TO OR OCCUPIED BY IVORIAN TEACHERS (REFTEL). PURPORTING

TO REFLECT VIEWS OF THE TEACHERS, THE LEAFLET ARGUED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT DECISION IN A FAIRLY MODERATE, PRAGMATIC, AND NON-DEMAGOGIC MANNER. ACCORDING TO THE LEAFLET, THE BONUS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE THE TEACHERS IN LIEU OF HOUSING WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT FOR ALTERNATIVE QUARTERS IN THE EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE ABIDJAN MARKET. MOREOVER, ALTERNATIVE HOUSING WAS NOT AVAILABLE NEAR THEIR SCHOOLS AND THE RESULTING COSTS AND HARDSHIPS WOULD UNDERMINE THEIR ABILITY TO DO THEIR JOBS WELL. THE LEAFLET WARNED THE FRENCH COOPERANTS THAT, IF THE GOVERNMENT DECISION WERE IMPLEMENTED, XENOPHOBIA WOULD GROW.

2. IN RESPONSE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PDCI PHILIPPE YACE HELD WELL PUBLICIZED MEETINGS WITH FRENCH COOPERANTS AND WITH OFFICIALS OF THE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION. YACE ASSURED THE COOPERANTS THAT THEY WERE WELCOME AND NEEDED IN IVORY COAST AND THAT INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LEAFLET DID NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF IVORIAN TEACHERS. AFTER THE MEETING WITH THE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, YACE AND ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS CONDEMNED PERPETRATORS OF THE LEAFLET AND REPEATED IT DID NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF IVORIAN TEACHERS. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, HOWEVER, THE GOIC HAD AT LEAST TEMPORARILY BACKED DOWN FROM ITS DECISION TO HOUSE THE FRENCH COOPERANTS IN HOUSING PREVIOUSLY PROMISED TO IVORIAN TEACHERS. (ACCORDING TO OTHER SOURCES, THE NUMBER OF COOPERANTS IN IVORIAN EDUCATION WILL INCREASE IN THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR AND AGGRAVATE HOUSING SHORTAGE).

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3. IN RECENT DAYS, ANOTHER LEAFLET APPEARED REPORTING AN IMMINENT INCREASE IN THE COST OF TRANSPORTATION. ACCORDING TO THE LEAFLET, TAXI AND BUS FARES WOULD BE DOUBLED TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE POOR. IN A MORE STRIDENT TONE THAN THE EARLIER LEAFLET, IT REFERRED TO IVORIANS AS SHEEP AND ASKED THEM TO WAKE UP TO THE FACT THAT THEY WERE BEING ROBBED. THE LEAFLET CONCLUDED BY ASKING THE PEOPLE TO REFUSE TO WORK ON THE DAY THE FARES WERE INCREASED. AFTER A MEETING CALLED TO DISCUSS THE LATEST LEAFLET ON 14 AUGUST, THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE PDCI STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE CIRCULATION OF SUCH LEAFLETS, WARNED THOSE RESPONSIBLE, AND ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ALL MEASURES NECESSARY TO PREVENT FURTHER CIRCULATION. STATING THAT IN IVORY COAST DIALOGUE AT ALL LEVELS HAD BECOME AN INSTITUTION AND THAT EVERY CITIZEN HAD ADEQUATE POLITICAL STRUCTURES AT HIS DISPOSAL TO EXPRESS HIS GRIEVANCES, THE POLITICAL BUREAU ASSERTED THAT THE USE OF ANONYMOUS LEAFLETS "TO DECEIVE THE PEOPLE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE UNAVOWED PLANS WAS HIGHLY CONDEMNABLE AND WOULD NO LONGER BE TOLERATED." AS IN THE CASE OF THE EARLIER LEAFLET, THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT REACTION WAS QUITE STRONG AND WELL PUBLICIZED.

4. COMMENT: WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE LEAFLETS SIGNIFIED WIDESPREAD OR SIGNIFICANT ANTI-GOVERNMENT SENTIMENT, THEIR APPEARANCE WAS FIRST RECENT INDICATION OF SOME DISAFFECTION WITH ESTABLISHED

CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATING GRIEVANCES, I.E., OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED ASSOCIATIONS AND THE PDCI SUB-SECTIONS. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, SOME IVORIAN TEACHERS BELIEVED THEIR ASSOCIATION WAS NOT A MEANINGFUL CHANNEL TO AIR THEIR COMPLAINTS AND DECIDED TO RESORT TO CIRCULATING A LEAFLET. APPARENTLY SOME UNIDENTIFIED CITIZENS ALSO DECIDED THAT PARTY AND GOVERNMENT CHANNELS WERE NOT "ADEQUATE POLITICAL STRUCTURES" THROUGH WHICH TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN OVER THE RISING COST OF TRANSPORTATION. WHETHER OR NOT THE MOTIVATION FOR THE LEAFLETS ON TRANSPORTATION COSTS WAS MORE POLITICAL THAN ECONOMIC -- AS YACE IMPLIED IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS BUT FOR WHICH WE HAVE AS YET SEEN NO EVIDENCE -- THE REACTION OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNUSUALLY SHARP IN TONE. ACCORDING TO HIS CHEF DU CABINET, YACE WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT RESORT TO ANONYMOUS PUBLICATION CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED. YACE'S
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SHARP REACTION POSSIBLY REFLECTED GOIC CONCERN THAT RECOURSE TO ANONYMOUS LEAFLETS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SPREAD, FOR EXAMPLE, TO THE PREPARATION OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WHERE THE GOIC CONSENSUS APPROACH HAS ENCOUNTERED SOME OPPOSITION (REFTEL).

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